

# Career Broadening— A Career Enhancing Program

by Brian Sprague

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Since the restructuring of career broadening (CB) training and developmental assignments within the Financial Management Career Program (FMCP) in October of 1996, 78 of the best and brightest FMCP registrants have been selected to broaden their careers by taking on challenging assignments outside of their customary financial management disciplines. Feedback on the program indicates the new skills gained prove valuable in personal and professional enrichment. In the following paragraphs, the CB program will be explained in detail. These positions are specifically designed to give you a structured method of gaining new skills within the financial management community. The Air Force benefits by receiving a more well-rounded, high-potential manager and FMCP registrants benefit by experiencing the challenge of new job locations and command organizations; truly a chance to get out of the stovepipe and see a different view. Give it a chance, the opportunity will provide dividends throughout your career.

FMCP CB positions are centrally managed by the Air Force Personnel Center (AFPC) and administered by the FMCP PALACE Team. Positions are specifically designed and strategically located to provide developmental opportunities to broaden the skills and enhance the leadership perspective of high-potential, mid-level personnel. CB positions are nonsupervisory and mainly at grades GS-12 and GS-13. Positions are assigned at locations throughout the Air Force to perform specific financial management assignments or to accomplish particular objectives. Such assignments, although of a short-term nature, are sufficiently complex and demanding to increase and broaden experience. Assignment to a CB position is limited in duration, most of the positions are for two years. There are currently 30 CB authorizations in the FMCP.

The FMCP Policy Council allocates positions to organizations based on proposed training opportunities and needs. When there are a sufficient number of CB vacancies (usually 15 each calendar year), a message is sent out to all FM communities worldwide soliciting requests for potential CB hosts. Replies are reviewed by the FMCP Training and Development (T&D) Panel which then selects which locations will be included in the potential CB sites list in the call for nominations. Normally, there are 30-35 position requests from FM hosts, but only 15-18 of those will be filled in any given year. Hosts have a chance to put their name in the hat each vacancy cycle with the understanding the positions are temporary and do not belong to the host organization. When a Cber comes off the assignment, the authorization goes back into the central pool for fill in the next cycle. Currently, the 30 slots are spread out around the world, from Hickam to Ramstein, and to locations encompassing various organizational levels. The PALACE Team will work with the selected site to develop the CB position description and training plan. AFPC/DPKX is re-

sponsible for classification of the position description and approval of the training plan. The duties and responsibilities of the position must be carefully developed to facilitate CB experience opportunities.

Career Broadening positions are normally filled through competitive re-assignment or change-to-lower grade. These positions are exempt from the DoD Priority Placement Program if the person returns to the same location. As positions are established, or as vacancies occur, FMCP announces the intent to fill the vacancy by an AIG message to all Civilian Personnel Flights (CPFs) and to the financial management community. The message specifies the position location, occupational series and grade, along with a brief description of the position's duties. The message will also indicate a cutoff date for interested registrants to update their AF Form 2675, Civilian Career Program Registration and Personal Availability, through their servicing CPF. This information is also available at the FMCP website [www.afpc.randolph.af.mil/cp/fmcp](http://www.afpc.randolph.af.mil/cp/fmcp) and will be placed on the new FMCP list server. When you subscribe to the list server, the call for CB nominations will come to you automatically as an e-mail message. If interested, you'll then be asked to electronically request an application.

To be considered for a CB assignment, individuals must be registered in the FMCP and be a permanent Air Force civilian employee. Registrants must meet time-in-grade and Office of Personnel Management (OPM) qualification standards for the position announced. Eligible candidates will be screened and ranked on the basis of their experience related to the position being filled, and their FMCP Total Person Score (TPS). Generally, all FMCP registrants at the GS-12 level and above qualify for CB positions. The vacancies are announced by message and through the FMCP website usually in the March timeframe each year for summer report dates. The application requires the registrant to complete statements on how the assignment will benefit the Air Force and themselves, and also a management endorsement on the registrant for demonstrating higher-level potential. The applicant must then choose at least one desired location from the potential sites on the list. Applicants will not be considered for any locations that are not included in their desired preferences. The greater the number of preferred locations listed, the greater the chances for selection. The T&D Panel then meets to make selections, choosing the best CB candidates and then trying to match them with one of their desired locations.

Management endorsement and the takeback agreement are important components of the CB process. On the application, the first-level supervisor must sign, concurring with the application procedure. The application also asks for a senior MAJCOM or equivalent FM signature as an indication of endorsement and as a commitment to accepting the person back to the pre-CB location when the CB assignment is complete. The Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) or takeback agreement is to document the conditions associated with subject assignments for the selectee. The selectee agrees to be reassigned back to a FMCP position located at the pre-CB location if not selected for a position using the standard competitive referral action process. At the 18-month point of the tour, the CBer will be contacted to update her or his geographic location codes; the PALACE Team will assist in monitoring vacancies at those locations and will assist in placing the CBer at one of these desired locations when the CB assignment ends. However, there are no guarantees, the default position is to return to the pre-CB location. During the CB assignment, the employee will not be precluded from consideration and selection for promotion to other positions for which eligible. If selected for promotion during the CB assignment, the MOA will be terminated. If a Permanent Change of Station (PCS) is taken to go on a CB assignment, the employee may not PCS again for another 12 months. No competitive reassignment referrals, however, will be made until 180 calendar days before the scheduled end of the CB assignment. In reality, experience shows that most CBers move on to further their career goals and do not return to the pre-CB location.

The CB program is a great venue for FMCP registrants to enrich their skills and at the same time gain a personally rewarding career experience. Competition is definitely tough for these positions, but the reward is worth the effort. I'll be looking for your name when the next cycle begins! If you have any questions, please call the FMCP PALACE Team at DSN 665-2687/2695, or e-mail Mr Brian Sprague at [Brian.Sprague@afpc.randolph.af.mil](mailto:Brian.Sprague@afpc.randolph.af.mil).

